

Welcome to Worship at Peace Lutheran Church

Reverend William L. Nelson-Loefke, Pastor

Christmas Eve -- December 24, 2023 6:00PM

***Congregation Stands**

"Christmas at 'the Church in the Country'"

Prelude

"O Little Town of Bethlehem," arr. by K Varner

Lighting of the Advent Candles

A Meditation

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised King will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the Grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world!

Welcome

***The Gathering Hymn**

#277 "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing"

***Invocation**

P: In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

Opening Dialogue

P: Come, all who seek the truth.

C: **You will find a little Babe lying in a manger.**

P: Come, all who hunger for justice.

C: **You will find a little Babe lying in a manger.**

P: Come, all who yearn for abundant life.

C: **You will find a little Babe lying in a manger.**

P: Come, all who labor and are heavy laden.

C: **You will find a little Babe lying in a manger.**

Thank you to our Worship Participants

Lector: MaryAnne Loefke

Prayers and Communion Deacon: Joe Ranschau

AV: Steve Rehder, Neil Ranschau

Advent Ceremony: Homziakov family

Organist: Becky Scholten

A Prayer for Christmas Eve

O God, You once caused this Holy Night to shine with the brightness of the true Light. By Your Spirit we have known the mystery of that Light here on earth. Bring us also to the full measure of its joys in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Announcements

Sunday School is in recess until January 5. Enjoy the season of Christmas!

Pastoral Visits

You may reach Pastor Bill at 605-228-7879. If you have a pastoral emergency or simply wish to have a conversation, give him a call. You may also set up an appointment to meet at the church office or schedule a visit at your home. The year has been challenging, but God leads us, walks with us, and guides our path ...always!

Prayer List

Our church leadership; Luke Helmers family; Evert DeBondt, Lorene Franken, Lura Gayer, Arlene Miller, Orville Rehder, Shirley Rehder, Irene Sneller (CrPointe Estates SC); Harold Moeller (Whispering Heights RV).

Please keep all in need in your thoughts and prayers. If you or someone you know would like to be included on the Prayer List, please contact Pastor Bill.

Offerings and Gifts

- The offering plate is in the narthex. God bless you richly as you give.

- We are accepting a special Christmas and year-end offering for Pastor Bill and Mary Anne. Place these gifts in the Green Box in the narthex.

The Sermon

"Endless Peace"

The Hymn of the Day

#267 "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day"

*The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, He came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit He became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son He is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Blessing of Tithes and Offerings

#815 "Doxology"

P: God of abundance, we bring before You the precious fruits of Your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of Your Son, our Savior and Lord. **Amen**

*The Prayers of the People

Reader: "O come to us, abide with us."

C: "Our Lord Emmanuel."

*The Great Thanksgiving

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

*The Words of Institution

The Proclamation of Christ

P: As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death and resurrection until He comes again.

C: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

*The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Distribution of Communion

All are welcome to participate in Holy Communion. Ushers will guide you to the stations of bread and wine. The wine trays hold both wine (deep purple) and grape juice (amber). You are invited to choose whichever is most meaningful to you in your faith journey.

Communion Hymn

#251 "It Came Upon A Midnight Clear"

Communion Interlude of Music

Lighting of the Candles

The candle light is passed from the pastor to acolytes and assisting ministers who pass it to the congregation. Please be careful with open flames and our small children, For your safety and to prevent wax from dripping, please do NOT tilt your lit candle. Tip only the unlit candle. Hold your candle straight up and it will not drip. Please blow out the flame gently.

P: As the light of these candles illumines our faces, it symbolizes the light of Christ, a child in the manger at Bethlehem, a Savior suffering our death on the cross, and soon to come from his throne on high as Judge of us all. He is our Light here on earth and the Eternal Light who enlightens heaven, where there is no need of candle or sun. Rejoice, for the Light of the world has come, who transforms us with the brightness of His glory. This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaimed to you: that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

C: If we say we have fellowship with Him but still walk in darkness, we lie, and do not live according to the truth.

P: But if we walk in the Light, as He is the Light, we have fellowship with one another.

C: And the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all our sins.

(The candlelight is passed and begins to spread throughout the congregation.)

P: You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and then cover its light. Instead they set the lamp on its stand, set it up high, and it lights everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before all people, that they may see your good works and give praise to your Father in heaven.

The Closing Hymn

#253 "Silent Night"

(Pastor opens the hymn with a short monologue, and sings verse one in German. The congregation joins and sings all verses in English.)

***The Benediction**

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look upon you with favor + and give you peace.

C: Amen! Glory to God in the Highest! And peace to His people on earth!

(Please extinguish your candles gently at this time)

The Dismissal

(We leave with hushed voices as we walk into the night ...awaiting the new light of the birth of Christ Jesus.)

Postlude

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain," arr. by J Southbridge

***MERRY CHRISTMAS! May you also know the voice of the angels,
"Fear not, for I bring you news of GREAT joy!
...tis Christ the Lord!"***

***Confession and Absolution**

P: As we prepare to celebrate our Lord's birth, let us also remember the reason this Holy Child was born: He has appeared once and for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

C: We confess that we have sinned against God and against one another. We are powerless to undo the entangled mess of sin in our lives. We yearn for peace with God and reconciliation with one another, yet we cannot accomplish it ourselves. Forgive us, Lord, and restore our souls, that our lives reflect not our sin, but the joy of the birth of Your only Son into the world.

P: Jesus is Emmanuel, God-with-us. What we are powerless to do, He has done for us. His name is Jesus. He has come to save us from our sins. Therefore, in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I declare that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

***A Hymn of Praise**

#249 "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

***Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God, You made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of His glory; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen
(congregation is seated)

A Hymn of Praise

#278 "Angels We Have Heard on High"

The Old Testament Lesson

Isaiah 9:2-7

The New Testament Lesson

Titus 2:11-14

***The Holy Gospel**

St. Luke 2:1-20

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the second chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

The Gospel Response

P: The Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.